

06/11/92

**SHORTGRASS COUNTRY by Monte Noelke**

In my old neighborhood in Mertzon, a fellow who lives nearby makes saddles and also uses his craft to cut out chaps and restore old rigs. Raised on a ranch, he's fully familiar with the purposes of his handiwork. His shop probably runs a low volume of business; and yet, in spite of the town being short on stock hands, the informal rodeo clubs support quite a number of "head and heelers" and goat and calf ropers who use a lot more tack than the men on the ranches.

All of our dealings up to this spring have been cordial. He's restrung and relined my saddle once and cut out a couple of latigoes. The two pairs of chaps he's made for Christmas gifts turned out to be satisfactory. But the what he calls "patching," and I call "restoring" of my chaps has caused a serious breach in our friendship.

For the last couple of late winters or early springs, he's sewed the pockets back and built new leather buttons and keepers for the legs. The tear on the bottom of the right side has had to have a sizable piece of leather replaced nearly as high as the knee. Discounting a few frazzled places and the buttons already mentioned, the left leg stays in good shape.

Before we started marking the guy who works with me dropped off my chaps with a list of defects and instructions to ask what was still under the implied warranty act and what was going to be owed above the guarantee.

The repairman must have been in bad humor. His reply was that he hadn't been paid for the last job; furthermore, his sewing machine wasn't a magic wand capable of stitching leather dating back to the stage coach days.

As I was too busy to come to town, the next move was to use the telephone. We agreed on \$15 to settle the two accounts (and even at that preposterous figure, he didn't sound pleased). After he admitted how much a new pair of chaps cost, I told him I had about \$600 worth of old chaps hanging up in the saddle shed and they should be valuable enough to take care of one new pair of chaps with a balance left over to work over a saddle or two.

He replied he'd get back to me; but at this writing, he hasn't called.

Styles and customs sure have changed since those old chaps were made. A hand came out for one day during the works. He had on a pair of knee length numbers which apparently dissolved in blood, as he kept busy most of the time rubbing off the spewing from the fresh docked lamb's tails.

The best thing when neighbors fall out is for them to stop doing business with each other until they cool off. Tanning was more of an art when my chaps were made. He claims he's too young to know the difference, but that's just a trick to keep from standing behind his work.